

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-05

CCO-00 SCCT-01 SSM-03 ACDA-07 ACDE-00 AID-05 OMB-01

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O R 231325Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9744

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NY

CIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMSIXTH FLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3644

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STUTTGART FOR ELG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION APRIL 23: CEASEFIRE ROCKS ALONG AS
FRANGIE STILL HASN'T SIGNED

REF: BEIRUT 3600 (O 221325Z APR 76)

1. SECURITY PICTURE REMAINS MIXED IN BEIRUT. FURTHER PROGRESS HAS BEEN SHOWN INSERTING PLA BETWEEN WARRING FACTIONS ALONG "GREEN LINE" THAT SEPARATES MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN QUARTERS, BUT EXCHANGES OF FIRE CONTINUE TO ERUPT IN PARTS OF CITY FROM TIME TO TIME. THESE ARE USUALLY MEDIUM-RANGE OR LONG-RANGE DUELS WITH MORTARS AND ARTILLERY. ONE SUCH EXCHANGE OCCURRING ABOUT 2000 HOURS LOCAL YESTERDAY WAS A REPEAT OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S BATTLE BETWEEN WEST BEIRUT'S 85 MM CANNON AND BEIT MARI'S 155 MM HOWITZER. LIKE THE EARLIER EXCHANGE, THIS LASTED LESS THAN AN HOUR AND RESULTED IN INDISCRIMINATE DAMAGE. ANOTHER FLARE-UP OCCURRED EARLY YESTERDAY EVENING BETWEEN NABAA, A SHIITE MOSLEM ENCLAVE IN EAST BEIRUT, AND SURROUNDING CHRISTIAN AREAS INCLUDING THE ARMENIAN QUARTER OF BOURG HAMMOUD. (NABAA, IN THE PAST A FREQUENT FLASH POINT, HAS BEEN QUIET IN RECENT WEEKS. ITS VULNERABLE POSITION IN MIDST OF CHRISTIANLAND SEEMS TO HAVE PROMPTED RESTRAINT BY BOTH ITS INHABITANTS AND THEIR ADVERSARIES. THE ARMENIAN QUARTER NEXT TO IT HAS BEEN MORE OR LESS NEUTRAL IN THE FIGHTING ALL ALONG.) THE JOINT TRUCE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE MANAGED TO STOP THE NABAA FIGHT, IN ONE OF ITS FIRST MAJOR SUCCESSES.

2. ANOTHER SUCCESS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE WAS ARRANGING AN EXCHANGE OF FLOUR FOR GASOLINE YESTERDAY BETWEEN WEST AND EAST BEIRUT. THREE TRUCKS OF FLOUR WENT FROM SILOS AT THE PORT, WHICH IS IN CHRISTIAN HANDS, TO THE MOSLEM AREA OF WEST BEIRUT. TODAY, GASOLINE IS SCHEDULED TO GO THE OTHER WAY. THIS WILL HELP ALLEVIATE SEVERE IMBALANCES IN THESE TWO COMMODITIES BETWEEN THE ZONES.

3. OUTSIDE BEIRUT, THE BATTLE BETWEEN ZGHORTIOTES AND PPS AROUND AMYOUN IN NORTH LEBANON SEEMS TO HAVE DIED DOWN, BUT EXCHANGES OF FIRE ARE REPORTEDLY STILL OCCURRING IN ZAHLE AREA
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IN BEKAA VALLEY. A NEW DANGER POINT HAS APPEARED, THIS ONE IN SOUTH LEBANON NEAR NABATIYAH. ELEMENTS BELONGING TO LT. KHATIB'S ARMY HAVE REPORTEDLY ATTACKED A MARONITE VILLAGE NAMED KLEA FOR LAST FEW DAYS. CURRENT SITUATION THERE IS NOT DETERMINED, BUT THERE IS FEAR OF BLOW-UP IN REGION IF CLASHES CONTINUE. AREA IS NEAR ISRAELI BORDER.

4. ON POLITICAL FRONT, EVERYONE STILL AWAITS FRANGIE'S SIGNATURE

ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. THE PRESIDENT'S ENVOYS ARE BACK FROM DAMASCUS AND ARE EXPECTED TO REPORT TO MARONITE "BIG FOUR" TODAY. (THE "BIG FOUR" MET YESTERDAY, BUT POSTPONED SUBSTANTIVE CONSIDERATION OF THE AMENDMENT ISSUE UNTIL TODAY.) ONE OF THE ENVOYS, SELIM EL-KHOURY, TOLD EMBOFF TODAY THAT HE EXPECTED FRANGIE TO SIGN THE AMENDMENT SOON. RESULTS OF TRIP TO SYRIAN CAPITAL HAD BEEN "GOOD." KHOURY ADDED HIS OWN PESSIMISTIC ASSESSMENT, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION WILL NOT SOLVE ANYTHING. THIS REFLECTS WIDESPREAD CHRISTIAN BITTERNESS AT THEIR BELEAGUERED STATE AND BELIEF THAT CONCESSIONS THEY MAKE LEAD ONLY TO FURTHER DEMANDS FROM LEFTISTS. KHOURY ALSO CASTIGATED USG FOR "ALL THE TIME TELLING THE SYRIANS TO BE RESTRAINED" IN MILITARY MOVES IN LEBANON. IN KHOURY'S VIEW, ONLY MAJOR SYRIAN INTERVENTION WILL END THE CRISIS. HE DID NOT MENTION POSSIBILITY CURRENTLY RUMORED IN BEIRUT OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION WITH SYRIA IN A PEACEKEEPING FORCE (SEE REFTTEL), THOUGH THIS MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN ON HIS MIND. FACT THAT FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON IS PRESENTLY IN DAMASCUS HAS FUELED SPECULATION HERE ABOUT SUCH A FRENCH-SYRIAN JOINT FORCE.

5. THERE APPEARS TO BE MOVE AFOOT AMONG SOME DEPUTIES TO CONVENE PARLIAMENT NEXT WEEK AND ELECT NEW PRESIDENT, ON THEORY THAT FRANGIE CONSIDERED AS "HAVING RESIGNED," IF PRESIDENT DOES NOT IN MEANTIME SIGN AMENDMENT. STRENGTH OF THIS ATTITUDE AMONG DEPUTIES IS UNCERTAIN. ITS LEADING EXPONENT IS SAEB SALAM, WHO DECLARED TO NEWSMEN YESTERDAY THAT THE 66 DEPUTIES WHO SIGNED THE PETITION LAST MONTH URGING FRANGIE'S RESIGNATION SHOULD BE CALLED TOGETHER BY SPEAKER. THERE ARE ALSO FURTHER RUMBLINGS FROM JUMBLATT'S LEFTISTS ABOUT THEIR INTENDED PROCLAMATION OF A "NEW REGIME" IF FRANGIE PERSISTS IN HIS PRESENT COURSE.

6. THE MAIN NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE POLITICAL "CAMPAIGN" IS EMERGENCE OF BOUTROS DIB, LEBANESE ENVOY TO VATICAN AND FORMER DIRECTOR
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GENERAL OF PRESIDENCY, AS CANDIDATE. HE RETURNED TO LEBANON RECENTLY WITH THE VATICAN DELEGATION THAT IS CURRENTLY HERE. (THIS DELEGATION HAS BEEN MAKING VARIOUS CONTACTS, BUT WE HAVE NO CONCRETE WORD AS YET ON RESULTS ACHIEVED. PURPOSE APPEARS TO BE MAINLY DISASTER RELIEF TOGETHER WITH VAGUELY DEFINED POLITICAL CONCILIATION.) DIB IS PUTTING HIMSELF OUT TO VARIOUS PEOPLE AS A "COMPROMISE" CANDIDATE. HE IS NOT ALONE IN THIS GAME, HOWEVER, AS WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT SEVERAL MARONITE FIGURES DROPPING HINTS OF THEIR "AVAILABILITY." WE EXPECT THIS TYPE OF MANEUVERING TO INCREASE AS PROSPECTIVE ELECTION DAY APPROACHES, UNLESS THERE IS A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE DEADLOCK BETWEEN SARKIS AND EDDE, THE FRONTRUNNERS. THIS DEADLOCK LOOKS AS TIGHT AS EVER.
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